

The Articles of Confederation: "A Firm League of Friendship"

Bailey: Chapter 9

Supplement: The Articles of Confederation

What is a "republic"? Republicanism? Did the Articles of Confederation create a republic?

Identifications:

republic, republican, tyranny, liberty, order, civic virtue, primogeniture, entail, property requirements (for voting), Virginia Statute of Religious Liberty.

Questions:

1. Define republican. Why did many see a republican government as a radical notion during the 1780s?
2. In what sense did the Revolution unleash a desire among some for greater liberty and equality? Why? To what degree was the expansion of liberty and equality realized during this period?
3. Why might some have feared the expansion of liberty and equality? Discuss in terms of both white men and women and blacks.
4. What sort of relationship did the Articles of Confederation create between the central government and the state governments? What powers did the Articles of Confederation give to the central government?
5. In what ways did the Articles of Confederation limit the power of the central government? Under the Articles, what important powers did the central government lack?

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Handout: Articles of Confederation Simulation

Why did some Americans come to believe that the Articles of Confederation needed to be replaced?

Identifications:

Northwest Territory, Land Ordinance of 1785, Northwest Ordinance of 1787, Shays' Rebellion

Questions:

1. Why was western land such a major problem for the nation? How did the government under the Articles systematize the settlement of western lands?
2. What were the main provisions and the significance of the Land Ordinance of 1785? What were the main provisions and the significance of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787?
3. In what sense were the Land Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwest Ordinance designed to be democratic/egalitarian?
4. Why did Americans increasingly criticize the Articles of Confederation as too weak? Be sure to mention both economic and political concerns.
5. What is the significance of Shays' Rebellion for the drafting of the Constitution?
6. How does the traditional fear of tyranny make the Articles of Confederation a "weak" attempt to construct a national government? Whom does a weak central government help? Whom does it hurt?